

STAT

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A 27

NEW YORK TIMES
19 August 1982

ESSAY

Organizing 'World PAC'

By William Safire

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18 — Why aren't the world's television screens filled with protests about the way Communist East Berlin has expelled the organizers of the June 27 "peace workshop," and has called up peace activists for military duty — jailing those who refuse to serve?

Why hasn't the Vietnamese artillery captain who defected two months ago been brought back to a suitable communications center and asked about the chemical weapons supplied by the Soviet Union — being used as "yellow rain" by Vietnamese units in Laos even today?

And why has no campaign been mounted to publicize and condemn the war of slander and blackmail being waged by the Communists running Nicaragua against individual priests who refuse to cooperate — a war in which the Sandinists censor pastoral letters from the Pope?

Why no sustained counterattack on these offenses against humanity and its institutions? Not so much because the press is biased, or the offenses are not of top rank, or the democracies lack the capacity for outrage.

The reason is that we are not organized, as Communists usually are, to strike back in the field of mass persuasion. The invaders of Afghanistan sponsor nuclear freezes; the crushers of Polish freedom identify themselves with the "peace movement" around the world. The forces of tyranny get away with condemning the forces of freedom for supporting the right of the people of El Salvador to choose their own government.

To set this straight — to find a means to encourage democracy actively and to shine a light on the wrongs of totalitarianism — a speechwriter in the State Department, Mark Palmer, came up with an idea that President Reagan expounded in his address to the British Parliament this summer.

The idea is to engage in an open political struggle with all those who seek to subvert the basic freedoms human beings tend to seek. The West Germans, through federally funded political institutes affiliated with their political parties, have led the way: in some third-world countries, they conduct political training and give money to democratic candidates. In Portugal, West German help made the difference when that country's democracy was in the balance.

Americans should stop being embarrassed about sharing our political know-how — money, mimeo machines and political action plans — with leaders and parties and institutions in beleaguered democracies; more than

that, we should carry the banner of political consciousness-raising to third-world and even Communist countries. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has been promoting a free labor movement abroad, as much as one organization could, for years. "This is not cultural imperialism," said Mr. Reagan, "it is providing the means for genuine self-determination and protection for diversity."

A group is now being organized to put the U.S. into organized political competition around the world. Not surprisingly, since it deals with politics, the embryonic "World PAC" has become embroiled in its own politics.

The Democratic and Republican national chairmen are working together fairly well on this, along with the American Political Foundation, a group brought in by Mr. Reagan's trade negotiator, Bill Brock. The N.S.C.'s Walter Raymond, I.C.A.'s Scott Thompson, Defense's Richard Stilwell, with State's Mr. Palmer, are the Government "honchos." All have agreed to offer the key part-time slot to a neo-conservative Democrat, Ben Wattenberg.

However, Mr. Brock and Under Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger also want the staff headed full time by a former Brzezinski aide, Alfred Friendly Jr.; Republicans advised by Richard Allen prefer Allen Weinstein, of the Georgetown Center for Strategic Studies. That impasse can be worked out in the textbook way, balancing the staff to reflect shades of opinion and party coloration.

More important, the organizers do not agree on the center of power: is this to be primarily a State Department operation? That would guarantee incoherence; State's inclination is traditionally to soothe rather than upset foreign countries. A C.I.A. front? That would get it shot down here even before it had a chance to be discredited abroad. A foundation effort? That usually leads to philanthropoid mush.

To get the politics out of Political Action, we must rely on politicians. It would be a mistake to center this much-needed activity in government, since that would invite constant hectoring about "destabilization" from overseas and from isolationists. The trick is to put the power of encouraging foreign party competition in the hands of the two American parties.

The time for this World PAC idea has come; the best way to avert military competition is to turn to economic and political competition. And in party politics, we should turn to the polls and labor skates: the public should fund international political competition, but the Government should not be in the driver's seat.